



EU ROPE

A blog by Jon Danzig

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Winston Churchill: A founder of the European Union

Jon Danzig

[14 comments](#)

Leaders of the European Union should revive Winston Churchill's post-war vision for a kind of 'United States of Europe', urged EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso this weekend.

'We need to show the same political courage and vision of [Winston Churchill](#),' said Mr Barroso. 'He was a man of foresight with an acute sense of history, often ahead of prevailing opinion, never shying away from saying what some might choose to ignore.'

But eurosceptics were having none of it. UKIP leader Nigel Farage said that the Commission president had 'hijacked one phrase' of Churchill and taken it out of context, 'to paint him as a fan of political union in Europe.'

Mr Farage added, 'Churchill once said, **"If Britain must choose between Europe and the open sea, she must always choose the open sea"**. Hardly encouraging words for the Commission.'

*(What Mr Farage doesn't say is that Churchill shouted this remark to the French leader, General Charles de Gaulle, in a **raging row** on the eve of the Normandy landings in 1944. Churchill had a 'roller coaster' relationship with de Gaulle and wanted to show loyalty to the US President, Franklin Roosevelt. Churchill angrily added, 'Every time I have to decide between you and Roosevelt, I will always choose Roosevelt.' Later, they made up over dinner and fine wine. Also see, **'D-Day: The Battle for Normandy'** by Antony Beevor.)*

Hundreds of mostly anonymous eurosceptics flocked to the reader's columns of [The Telegraph](#) and other UK newspapers to claim that Churchill would have been on their side, and he would have voted UKIP.

So who's right?

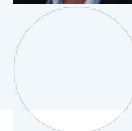
Well Sir Winston Churchill isn't here to say, and it's impossible to know what he would think of the world as it is now, 50 years after his death. But I believe that Nigel Farage is



Churchill, one of the founders of the European Union

EU ROPE

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[May 2014](#)
[March 2014](#)
[February 2014](#)
[January 2014](#)
[December 2013](#)
[November 2013](#)
[October 2013](#)
[September 2013](#)
[July 2013](#)
[June 2013](#)
[May 2013](#)
[April 2013](#)

not correct in stating that Churchill's call for a 'United States of Europe' was taken out of context by Barroso; or that Churchill would not have been a fan of political union in Europe. Neither do I believe for a moment that Churchill would vote UKIP, or that he was in any way a 'eurosceptic'.

Churchill wasn't a little Englander; not only did he promote and support a 'kind of United States of Europe, in which Britain would play a key role in helping to create, he also had a future vision of world government. I feel that those who now state otherwise are either misquoting Churchill, or more mischievously, accurately quoting Churchill but attributing the wrong date and circumstances.

What eurosceptics don't do is acknowledge Churchill's deep passion for an ambitious political union of governments.

After all, it was Prime Minister Churchill who announced in June 1940 the '**Declaration of Union**' between Great Britain and France. With the full backing of his Cabinet, Churchill stated, 'The two governments declare that France and Great Britain shall no longer be two nations, but one Franco-British Union... Every citizen of France will enjoy immediately citizenship of Great Britain; every British subject will become a citizen of France.'



Anglo-Franco stamp

An Anglo-French stamp was even designed to commemorate the Anglo-Franco union, but the Nazi invasion of France scuppered those plans. The proposals did demonstrate, however, that Churchill was in favour of political union between European countries.

After the first British victory of the Second World War at El Alamein, Churchill [wrote](#) to his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, on 21 October 1942:

'Hard as it is to say now.. I look forward to a United States of Europe, in which the barriers between the nations will be greatly minimised and unrestricted travel will be possible.'

(In a [lecture](#) about this in December 2011, Oxford Professor of Government, [Vernon Bogdanor](#), described Churchill's letter as, 'remarkably prescient' adding that he thought the comment, 'would get him expelled from the Conservative Party today'.)

In his famous [Zurich speech](#) of 1946, Churchill said, 'We must build a kind of United States of Europe.. The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important.. If at first all the States of Europe are not willing or able to join the Union, we must nevertheless proceed to assemble and combine those who will and those who can.'

At London's Albert Hall, in [May 1947](#), just a few months after his Zurich speech, [Churchill spoke](#) as Chairman and Founder of the [United Europe Movement](#) to 'present the idea of a United Europe in which our country will play a decisive part..'

Churchill argued that Britain and France should be the, 'founder-partners in this movement' and concluded, 'Britain will have to play her full part as a member of the European family'.

In May 1948 Churchill said in the [opening speech](#) to the Congress of Europe in Holland, that the drive towards a United Europe, 'should be a movement of the people, not parties'. (See also [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)).

Churchill, who also proposed a European ‘Charter’ and ‘Court’ of Human Rights, continued, ‘We aim at the eventual participation of all the peoples throughout the continent whose society and way of life are in accord with the Charter of Human Rights.’

During this momentous speech, Churchill proclaimed:

‘We cannot aim at anything less than the Union of Europe as a whole, and we look forward with confidence to the day when that Union will be achieved.’

And Churchill went much further than the idea of the immediate and urgent creation of a United States of Europe. Looking boldly to the future he stated, ‘We must endeavour by patience and faithful service to prepare for the day when there will be an effective world government resting on the main groupings of mankind.’ (*Click the graphic below to watch a brief video clip of Churchill’s speech.*)



‘Europe Unite’ – says Churchill, reported British Pathe News in 1948.

Click the graphic to watch a free preview.

In October that year, at a [Conservative Mass Meeting at Llandudno](#), Churchill made clear that Britain held a unique position at the heart of ***‘three majestic circles’***: the ***‘Empire and Commonwealth’***, ***‘the English speaking world’*** and a ***‘United Europe’***.

Churchill described these three circles as ‘co-existent’ and ‘linked together’. He said, ***‘We are the only country which has a great part in every one of them. We stand, in fact, at the very point of junction, and here in this Island at the centre of the seaways and perhaps of the airways also, we have the opportunity of joining them all together.’***

One year on, in August 1949, at the first meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Churchill delivered [his speech](#) in French, and said:

‘We are reunited here, in this new Assembly, not as representatives of our several countries or various political parties, but as Europeans forging ahead, hand in hand, and if necessary elbow to elbow, to restore the former glories of Europe..

‘There is no reason for us not to succeed in achieving our goal and laying the foundation of a United Europe. A Europe whose moral design will win the respect and acknowledgement of all humanity, and whose physical strength will be such that no person will dare to disturb it as it marches peacefully towards the future.’

Later in November 1949, at a [speech](#) given for the European Movement at Kingsway Hall,

London, Churchill said:

'The British Government have rightly stated that they cannot commit this country to entering any European Union without the agreement of the other members of the British Commonwealth. We all agree with that statement. But no time must be lost in discussing the question with the Dominions and seeking to convince them that their interests as well as ours lie in a United Europe.'

Churchill added, 'The French Foreign Minister, M. Schuman, declared in the French Parliament this week that, *'Without Britain there can be no Europe.'* This is entirely true. But our friends on the Continent need have no misgivings. Britain is an integral part of Europe, and we mean to play our part in the revival of her prosperity and greatness.'

The following year, in 1950, Churchill called for the creation of a **European Army** '..under a unified command, and in which we should all bear a worthy and honourable part.' (France objected to this plan).

Notice how in his speeches, Churchill said '**we**' must build a United States of Europe; **not 'they'**. He said '**we**' aim at the eventual participation of the peoples of Europe; **not 'they'**. He said '**we**' must assemble and combine countries to join the Union of Europe; **not 'they'**. He said '**we**' should create a European army; **not 'they'**' It's surely beyond doubt that Churchill wanted the UK to take part in the unification of Europe.

The European Union itself lists Sir Winston Churchill as one of its 'eleven founding fathers'.

EDWARD HEATH

Friday 27 September 1996

A Euro-sceptic? Churchill? Never

I knew Winston Churchill, I worked with him. I have read his speeches many times. He wanted a United States of Europe

Edward Heath, who knew Churchill, claimed he wasn't a eurosceptic

In an article for **The Independent** newspaper in 1996 by former UK prime minister, Edward Heath – who I interviewed when I was a teenager – he wrote, 'I knew Winston Churchill, I worked with him, I stayed with him at his home, and I have read his speeches many times. I can assure you that Winston Churchill was no Eurosceptic.'

On Churchill's call in 1946 for a 'United States of Europe', Edward Heath clarified, 'I readily accept that at that time Churchill did not envisage Britain being a full member of this united Europe, but in gleefully seizing upon this point, Euro-sceptics have misunderstood or misrepresented the nature of Churchill's attitude to full British participation in Europe. This reluctance was based on circumstance; it was not opposition based on principle. And the circumstances have changed in such a way that I am sure Churchill would now favour a policy that enabled Britain to be at the heart of the European Union.'

He added, 'Churchill would be the first to realise that in the world today, where an isolated Britain would be dwarfed by five great powers, the United States, Russia, China, Japan and the European Union, Britain's full participation in the European Union is vital, both for Britain and the rest of the world.'



Jon Danzig interviewed PM
Edward Heath

When read fully and in context, my opinion is that Churchill not only enthusiastically believed in the ever-closer union of Europe, in which the UK would play a leading role, but also eventually a world government. He was, at the least, a **confederalist**, but I would also

argue, even a 'kind of **federalist** too. He had great vision for a political 'union of nations' which it seems few are now fully recognising or acknowledging.

And although it seems that Churchill didn't at first envisage Britain being a full member of 'a kind of United States of Europe, it's clear that Churchill's views later changed, as the British Empire and Commonwealth diminished, and Britain's world influence shifted.

*(Churchill was renowned for **changing his views** according to circumstances: he started his political life as a Conservative MP; then resigned to become a Liberal MP; then resigned from the Liberals to become a Conservative MP again).*

During a **debate in June 1950** in the House of Commons to discuss a united Europe, Churchill said that he could not 'at present' foresee Britain being 'a member of a Federal Union of Europe'. However, Churchill went on to explain that this was primarily because of Britain's position, 'at the centre of the British Empire and Commonwealth', and, 'our fraternal association with the United States of America.'

Crucially, in answering the question '**Are you prepared to part with any degree of national sovereignty in any circumstances for the sake of a larger synthesis?**', Churchill responded:

'We are prepared to consider and, if convinced, to accept the abrogation of national sovereignty, provided that we are satisfied with the conditions and the safeguards... national sovereignty is not inviolable, and it may be resolutely diminished for the sake of all men in all the lands finding their way home together.'

Commenting on this in his autobiography, 'The course of my life', Edward Heath wrote, 'This shows conclusively that, for all his practical reservations during the late 1940s and early 1950s, Churchill was never *in principle* against our membership of the European Community.'

Churchill made his last speech about Europe at London's Central Hall, Westminster in July 1957; some four months after six founding nations established the European Economic Community by signing the **Treaty of Rome** (France, Italy, West Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg). Churchill welcomed the formation of a 'common market' by the six, *provided that* 'the whole of free Europe will have access'. Churchill added, 'we genuinely wish to join'.

But Churchill also warned:

'If, on the other hand, the European trade community were to be permanently restricted to the six nations, the results might be worse than if nothing were done at all – worse for them as well as for us. It would tend not to unite Europe but to divide it – and not only in the economic field.' (Source: *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches Vol. 8 page 8681*)

During the 1960s Churchill's health rapidly declined, but his support for a united Europe didn't. According to Churchill's last Private Secretary, **Sir Anthony Montague Brown**, in August 1961, Churchill wrote to his constituency Chairman:

'I think that the Government are right to apply to join the European Economic Community..'

In this letter, also quoted in Sir Anthony's book, '**Long Sunset**' (pages 273-274), Churchill supported the 'welding' of West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg into 'an organic whole', which he described as a 'happy outcome' of the European Economic Community. Churchill added, '**We might well play a great part in these developments to the profit of not only ourselves, but of our European friends**

also.'

Sir Anthony also confirmed that in 1963, just two years before Churchill died, he wrote in a private letter:

'The future of Europe if Britain were to be excluded is black indeed.'

The Telegraph

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David Cameron 'must embrace Churchill's vision of United States of Europe'

The current generation of EU leaders, including David Cameron, must revive Winston Churchill's vision of a United States of Europe says José Manuel Barroso



Telegraph tempers: on whose side would Churchill be today?

Of course, my comments and opinions will not satisfy the eurosceptics. Nor those readers of **The Telegraph** today who accused me of being a 'mendacious fool' lying about Churchill, who they claim may have supported a united Europe, but didn't want Britain to have any part of it.

Another reader, refreshingly commenting under her real name of **Michele Keighley**, firmly stated that Churchill was with the 'Anglo-sphere' and not the European Union. She quoted Churchill as saying, **'We have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it.'**

We are linked but not combined. We are interested and associated but not absorbed.'

*(But what is rarely revealed by eurosceptics about this quote is that Churchill wrote it for America's **Saturday Evening Post** on 15 February 1930).*

To cool-down what was becoming a very heated and in some quarters a nasty exchange on The Telegraph about whose side Churchill would be on today, I posted this final response to Ms Keighley and almost 1,000 other readers comments:

'If you go to ten historians, you'll get ten different points of view. I have expressed my opinion from Churchill's speeches, and they were quoted accurately, as you have also quoted Churchill accurately. I don't think either of us are being dishonest. Churchill was a complicated man who for sure supported the idea of a European Union, and I feel he wanted the UK to play a full part in that. Of course, it's open to debate and interpretation.'

'Churchill's not here. We need to make up our own minds. I urge people to have a mature, respectful debate. *No argumentum ad hominem*. We surely want this to be civil, and not a civil war.'



Jon Danzig next to a tribute to Sir Winston Churchill at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Churchill is recognised as one of the founders of the European Union and has an entire building named after him at the European Parliament.

Question asked on Quora:

‘Why is an openly racist leader like Winston Churchill still celebrated in Britain?’ Click to read [Jon Danzig’s reply](#).

https://twitter.com/Jon_Danzig/statuses/408562499441549312

Useful links:

[New Europeans](#) - Promoting the value of EU citizenship in the UK

[British Influence](#) - Campaigning for British leadership in Europe

Other articles by [Jon Danzig](#):

[Letter from Europe: Why I’m a Union man](#)

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14 Responses to Winston Churchill: A founder of the European Union

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Jaka says:

27 November 2013 at 9:21 pm

Today – EU = CMEA II.
Would Churchill?



Phil Lucas says:

1 December 2013 at 1:15 pm

Our future clearly remains within a Unighted Europe, an American recently commented that it took 200 years to get the Unighted States where it is today and that we in Europe have only just started!

My great concern is that the froth in the media is largley negative and sensationalist. Most people in the UK are not out on the streets in protest about being in the EU, nor do we see countless protest marches. However, there will need to be some urgent 'positive publicity' and debate to ensure that the 'Froth' will have little chance of destroying the very hard work of many great thinkers over the last half century or more. These are interesting times when we also have the Scotland Independance issues running. Interesting indeed!

Pingback: [Remove disruptive UK from the EU | The Economic Voice](#)



david barnby says:

14 December 2013 at 7:09 pm

Churchill was quite clear about his vision of 'Europe' when he revealed in Parliament in 1950 that he would oppose the surrender of any British sovereignty to a European Government, control of the European Movement by his son in law was wrenched away and handed to Georges Rebattet.

Corporate and CIA patronage and money through the American Committee for a United Europe (ACUE) was transferred to euro-enthusiast Paul-henri Spaak, and the EM Secretariat transferred from London to Brussels.

That was the end of British influence in the development of Europe, EEC and EU.

It could and should have been different. If Sandys could have fought off American (though ACUE) dominance of EM and the body used to promote a Europe of truly democratic, but independent nations, then Europe and the peoples of Europe would not be in the mess we have today.



Jon Danzig says:

14 December 2013 at 9:02 pm

Thank you for your contribution David Barnby. You stated that, 'Churchill was quite clear about his vision of 'Europe' when he revealed in Parliament in 1950 that he would oppose the surrender of British sovereignty to a European Government.'

I have checked Hansard* for the year 1950, and that's not quite how Churchill expressed his view at the time. I do cover this point in my article. In his speech to Parliament on 27 June 1950 on a debate about the Schuman Plan – which eventually led to the creation of today's European Union – Churchill said:

'I cannot conceive that Britain would be an ordinary member of a Federal Union limited to Europe in any period which can at present be foreseen.'

However, I consider that this wasn't a principled position by Churchill against Britain ever joining a Federal Union of Europe; it was a practical position for that particular time. During the same debate on the same day, Churchill chose to answer this question:

'Are you prepared to part with any degree of national sovereignty in any circumstances for the sake of a larger synthesis?'

To which Churchill answered:

'The Conservative and Liberal Parties say, without hesitation, that we are prepared to consider, and if convinced to accept, the abrogation of national sovereignty, provided that we are satisfied with the conditions and the safeguards.'

Since writing my article, I have found a further interesting reference, regarding a letter which Churchill wrote to his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, on 21 October 1942, after the first British victory of the war at El Alamein:

'Hard as it is to say now.. I look forward to a United States of Europe, in which the barriers between the nations will be greatly minimised and unrestricted travel will be possible.'

In a lecture about this in December 2011, Professor Vernon Bogdanor described Churchill's comment then as, 'remarkably prescient' adding that he thought the comment, 'would get him expelled from the Conservative Party today'.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, as stated in my article, Churchill made statements in favour of Britain's membership of the European Economic Community.

**If you have another reference from Hansard that I have overlooked, I shall be grateful if you will share it here.*



david barnby says:

15 December 2013 at 2:36 pm

Thank you Jon for bringing the 27th June 1950 Hansard debate to my attention – this is a big subject.

Churchill, a plutocrat, was driven by fear of communism and the Soviet union and was therefore motivated in seeking a European block as a bulwark which would prevent Western Germany coming under their domination.

Even Europhile Hugo Young in his book: 'This Blessed Plot' did not see Churchill as wanting 'his (Churchill's) speech at The Hague, which was regarded at the time as an historic address, could in due course be more exactly seen as a source-book for the confusion he created, simultaneously giving succour to the federalists while intending to do no such thing.....

In his speech on 27th June, Churchill spent much of it attacking Labour generally, but condemning them for not attending the conference on the Schuman Plan which was intended to bring coal and steel under common hegemony.

Churchill was unhappy about the issue having been brought up at all and blamed labour for it:

' that the fundamental issues which have been raised have sprung largely from the mismanagement of our affairs, and that a competent administration would never have needed to thrust them upon us at this time.'

and:

'I did not like the attitude of the French Government in springing this large question upon us so suddenly, '

It is plain that Churchill thought the government should have attended the conference with a view to ending the Franco/German quarrel and saw Britain's role as more of an enabler:

'They [the French] evidently wished the British Socialist Government to give a general affirmation in principle to the policy of a merger of the European heavy 2142 industries, and of British goodwill towards the ending of the quarrel of the centuries between France and Germany,..... '

Churchill clearly saw that some sovereignty would have to be sacrificed, but would never have countenanced what we have today – and unelected undemocratic bureaucracy in Brussels making perhaps 80% of our laws which are largely global corporatist inspired. He said, addressing the subject of the Empire and Commonwealth:

'Everyone knows that that stands first in all our thoughts. First, there is the Empire and Commonwealth; secondly, the fraternal association of the English-speaking world; and thirdly, not in rank or status but in order, the revival of united Europe as a vast factor in the preserving of what is left of the civilisation and culture of the free world.'

Churchill was also deceived about the source of funding for the European Movement:

'I was sorry that the hon. Member for Coventry, East, should have marred an able speech, as he so often does, by a gross misstatement when he says that European union 'is run and financed by federalists.'—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 26th June, 1950; Vol. 476. c. 2043.] That is quite untrue,...

My reference to Churchill saying he would oppose the surrender of British sovereignty came from Hugh Wilford's book:

'The CIA, the British left and the Cold War'.

I don't know where it came from, but the point I made is that Churchill's demonstrable lack of enthusiasm for Schuman's plan in particular and a United Europe in general caused the corporate and CIA driven American Committee for a United Europe (ACUE) to have control and financing of the European Movement taken away from London and the British and given to Belgium federalists Paul-Henri Spaak, Georges Rebattet and Retinger etc and headquartered in Brussels. The American's were not satisfied with a Europe of democratic nations they wanted a block they could control whether or not it was democratic.

If the American corporates had not interfered we might today have a Europe of democratic nations which everone could support – now we are in a right mess.

dave b



Richard Edwards says:

16 December 2013 at 8:46 pm

WSC was undoubtedly pro-Europe as his speeches consistently made clear. Here he is in 1950 at the Scottish Union May 18, 1950:

"For more than forty years I have worked with France. At Zurich I appealed to her to regain the leadership of Europe by extending her hand to bring Germany back into the European family. We have now the proposal which M. Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, has made for the integration of French and German coal and steel industries. This would be an important and effective step in preventing another war between France and Germany and lay at last to rest that quarrel of 1,000 years between Gaul and Teuton. Now France has taken the initiative in a manner beyond my hopes. But that by itself would not be enough. In order to make France able to deal on proper terms with Germany, we must be with France. The prime condition for the recovery of Europe is Britain and France standing together with all their strength and with all their wounds; and then these two nations offering their hands to Germany on honourable terms and with a great and merciful desire to look forward rather than back. For centuries France and England, and latterly Germany and France, have rent the world by their struggles. They have only to be united together to constitute the dominant force in the Old World and to become the centre of United Europe around which all other countries could rally. But added to this you have all the mighty approval of the great world power which has arisen across the Atlantic, and has shown itself in its hour of supremacy anxious only to make further sacrifices for the cause of freedom."

We honestly don't know what he would make of the the contemporary EU. But I suspect he would have been a driving force for reform and re-generation, particularly now as the Commonwealth has dwindled to little more than a talking shop, and the special relationship is not so special. As the arch proponent of the art of the possible Churchill would be the first to recognise that the nations of Europe can only face the challenges of the twenty-first century as one.



david barnby says:

17 December 2013 at 8:39 pm

Churchill in the House of Commons debate on 26th June 1950 on the Schuman plan that lead inexorably to what we see today, flatly denied that corporate forces were financing integration:

'I was sorry that the hon. Member for Coventry, East, should have marred an able speech, as he so often does, by a gross misstatement when he says that European union 'is run and financed by federalists [corporatists].' – [OFFICIAL REPORT, 26th June, 1950; Vol. 476. c. 2043.] 'That is quite untrue, ... ' he said.

Was Churchill ignorant of the truth, or was he covering up? If the latter (which is more likely), then this great man, who did so much to save Britain from invasion and domination in the early war years, in the end did the reverse – a great disservice to his country.

Churchill was a great orator and prolific writer, but mostly he made mistakes and his support, though luke-warm, for European Integration (he was very ambiguous about

Britain joining in – see Hugo Young's This Blessed Plot) was perhaps one of his biggest.



N Dowdney says:

27 December 2013 at 11:07 pm

Churchill always saw the future of the UK as reaching out to the world, not sheltering behind Euro tariff walls, he would not have supported the weakening of the supremacy of Parliament or the undermining of the British legal system.

A bit creative for the pro EU lobby to try and claim his posthumous support?

He saw the strength of a strong Anglo-US alliance rather than wavering policies in Europe.



Jon Danzig says:

27 December 2013 at 11:14 pm

The quotes from Churchill in my article speak for themselves. Churchill supported a kind of 'United States of Europe' and before he died supported Britain's application to join the European Economic Community. He accepted, 'the abrogation of national sovereignty, provided that we are satisfied with the conditions and the safeguards.'

You cannot deny the quotations. Of course, they are open to interpretation.



Thomas Fox says:

2 January 2014 at 11:39 am

The last lines in the last book The English Speaking Peoples WSC rote governments should not try to bring about the Union of Nations by Treaty without the wish of its people

The EU is now doing the exact opposite .



Jon Danzig says:

2 January 2014 at 1:09 pm

I agree with Churchill about democracy and that the consent of the people should always be sought. In the UK, our democracy is through Parliament, which has approved each and every change to our membership of the EEC/EC/EU. Not once have any changes been forced through without the democratic consent of our Parliament.

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